

Recognition of Prior Learning in Lifelong Learning Systems: A Comparative Policy Analysis and Implications for Thailand

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Abstract:

This study examines and compares the conceptual foundations, policy frameworks, system structures, and implementation approaches of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in selected countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, in order to develop policy and practical recommendations for strengthening RPL systems in the Thai context.

The study employed documentary research combined with a comparative approach. Data were collected from policy documents, legislation, national qualifications frameworks, research studies, and reports from relevant national and international organisations, as well as semi-structured interviews with 12 key informants. Data were analysed using Bereday's comparative framework, including description, interpretation, juxtaposition, comparison, and synthesis. (Bereday, 1964)

The findings indicate that effective RPL systems are characterised by strong integration with national qualifications frameworks, outcome-based assessment mechanisms, and coordinated governance structures. Australia and New Zealand demonstrate high levels of policy coherence and system integration, while Canada reflects a flexible but decentralised model. In contrast, Thailand exhibits fragmented implementation, weak alignment with qualifications frameworks, and limited use of competency-based assessment.

The study proposes policy recommendations at national, structural, and operational levels. Key priorities include establishing a coherent RPL policy framework, strengthening governance and coordination mechanisms, aligning RPL with the national qualifications framework, enhancing assessment quality, and building institutional capacity. These findings contribute to the development of more integrated, inclusive, and effective lifelong learning systems.

Keywords:

Recognition of prior learning (RPL), lifelong learning, comparative policy analysis, national qualifications frameworks, Thailand.